

## “What Utopia Would Feel Like”: Lars Von Trier’s ‘Dancer in the Dark’



This curious image (fig. 1), from Lars von Trier’s *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), presents us with the familiar situation of sitting in the darkness of the cinema with our eyes oriented towards the screen. Kathy (Catherine Deneuve) and Selma (Björk) are watching one of the golden age Hollywood musicals. The scene arrives during *Dancer in the Dark* when the already-myopic Selma’s sight has begun its rapid deterioration – in the present frame, she is now almost blind. Kathy, to compensate for Selma’s inability to see the musical, allows her to feel it by acting out the Busby Berkeley dance number with her fingertips in Selma’s palm. Selma is experiencing the musical as *there*, on the screen, and *here*, in the palm of her hand. The scene therefore brings to the fore, in quite a literal manner, questions of the haptic and the role of the body in cinematic spectatorship.<sup>1</sup> It reminds us that we do not just watch films with our eyes, but that cinema requires a body. The image therefore offers a snapshot that allows one to see within a single frame why *Dancer in the Dark*, in a way that this article will go on to explore, offers us a critical re-vision of the musical. It can be seen to mark a theoretical point of intersection between Laura Marks’ concept of ‘haptic visuality’ and Richard Dyer’s claim from his 1977 essay *Entertainment and Utopia*, that musicals show us “what utopia would feel like”.<sup>2</sup> The fact it is a musical Selma and Kathy are watching, and that *Dancer in the Dark* too is its own kind of musical, raises new concerns for the way the musical, in some circumstances, might be thought about in terms of the haptic, and feeling, both physical and emotional, moving away from traditional readings that have typically theorised the musical in terms of visual spectacle.

Though Dyer and Marks’ discussions stem from two different eras of film theory (one classical, the other contemporary) and speak about different cinemas (Hollywood entertainment in contrast to experimental and independent video and film), their dialogue is a productive one that gives us a new way of attending to and engaging with the musical and its development since its golden age.<sup>3</sup> As I will argue, *Dancer in the Dark* bridges these theories by foregrounding the role of the non-representational in thinking about utopia and feeling. In bringing together, at this juncture, critical perspectives and films that have typically been kept apart, *Dancer in*

*the Dark* is an important text for the way it allows us to think about the musical's past, present and future from a haptic perspective, and also allows us to reread Dyer's claim in light of new developments in film theory and scholarship.

Set in Washington State in the mid-1960s, *Dancer in the Dark* tells the story of Selma Jezkova, an immigrant from Czechoslovakia who suffers from a genetic condition that will eventually leave her blind. She works long hours in a factory to save for her son's eye operation, for he too will suffer her fate without this medical intervention, available only in the United States. Selma adores the golden age musicals, and, as her sight deteriorates, the viewer accompanies her into her aural world of hearing music in noise and imaginatively constructing colourful musicals from her bleak reality. As in the Hollywood musical, these episodes offer an escape from the brutal reality of the narrative world; Selma's landlord and neighbour, police-officer Bill (David Morse), takes advantage of Selma's blindness and steals her money to conceal his own bankruptcy from his wife. Selma kills him (because he asks her to) while trying to prise her cash from his grip. The film consciously refuses to provide narrative clarity for why Bill begs Selma to kill him, but this event sets in motion a process through the American justice system where Selma is tried, found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. It is a claustrophobic progress through a constrained narrative we know will yield no happy ending, and Selma's execution forms the film's final, harrowing scene. *Dancer in the Dark* is therefore a radically different kind of musical in both content and form that (like von Trier's subsequent work *Dogville*) engages in a deep critique of American values, including its healthcare, legal, judicial and punitive systems.<sup>4</sup> However, *Dancer in the Dark* poses specific questions concerning mimesis, the senses and intersubjectivity that leads the discussion towards new political concerns for the musical, through the film's interest in issues of marginality and displacement.

Marks defines haptic visuality as instances where "the eyes themselves function like organs of touch".<sup>5</sup> She argues that cinema appeals to senses other than the visual, that vision itself can be tactile and that images are, in fact, multi-sensory. Cinema's haptic qualities, according to Marks, take over in representation where narrative and optical visuality fail. In her discussion of intercultural cinema, where 'intercultural' is understood as an interstitial position between one or more cultures, Marks argues that cinema's haptic qualities can speak for those whose experiences are absent from recorded history and visual archive. She positions cinema's affect as beyond codes, as uncensored sensation, rather than cultural sensibility. Marks sees this as crucial to intercultural cinema as a mode of address that can speak from positions of marginality, foregrounding identity as a process rather than a position. As a genre, the golden age Hollywood musical is far removed from such marginal or intercultural concerns, representing instead one of the studio system's most mass produced and mass-consumed forms of entertainment. *Dancer in the Dark*, however, foregrounds ideas of both the haptic and the intercultural through the figure of Selma – a myopic, immigrant factory worker who loves and lives through these Hollywood musicals.<sup>6</sup>

In order to understand the musical as a commodified utopia and see how this is challenged by *Dancer in the Dark*, it is helpful to elaborate Dyer's original argument further and establish some of the paradigmatic conventions of the Hollywood musical. In *Entertainment and Utopia*, Dyer argues that musicals do not present models of utopian worlds, do not show specific idealistic alternatives, rather "utopianism is contained in the feelings it [the musical] embodies".<sup>7</sup> For Dyer, these embodied structures of feeling are embedded within the musical's use of non-

representational signs - signs that do not signify in figurative terms - such as “colour, texture, movement, rhythm, melody, camerawork”. It is the non-representational signs, rather than representational narrative or characters, which are crucial to the musical’s communication of utopian feelings. Dyer positions these feelings as responding to real social tensions, inadequacies or absences. According to Dyer, the musical conveys feelings of energy, abundance, intensity, transparency and community which function as temporary answers to social issues of exhaustion through work, scarcity, dreariness, manipulation and social fragmentation. Musical convention typically presents these social problems in the narrative world of the film, only to resolve them through the formal qualities of the musical numbers. One example of this, among many, is Busby Berkeley and Mervyn LeRoy’s *Gold Diggers of 1933*. As cultural texts, musicals are structured by these contradictions: between narrative and musical number, speech and song, walking and dancing, reality and fantasy etc. In order to negotiate the conflicting utopian and dystopian sensibilities, these contradictions must be ‘managed’ by making the transitions into the musical register feel natural. Musicals do so, for example, by using what Dyer coins as ‘papering-over-the-cracks devices’ such as the ‘cue for a song’, or by integrating the musical numbers into a narrative of the ‘backstage musical’ which provides an excuse for the transition into performance (e.g. Busby Berkeley and Lloyd Bacon’s *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*, 1933). Such strategies help to mask “the gap between what is and what could be” and “imply that the world of the narrative is also (already) utopian”.<sup>8</sup>

By Dyer’s standards, the musical emerges as a conservative text, consistent with the way it has been read by other theorists of the musical, such as Jane Feuer. Feuer has shown how musicals can unexpectedly be considered ‘self-reflexive’ texts in the way we have come to expect of more post-modern filmmaking: musicals demystify their own status as entertainment because they articulate the genre’s relationship to technology, the studio and its audience. Yet for Feuer, they remain conservative texts, “remythicizing” at another level, using reflexivity to “perpetuate rather than deconstruct the codes of the genre”.<sup>9</sup> *The Barkleys of Broadway* (1949), *Singin’ in the Rain* (1952) and *The Band Wagon* (1953) all include examples of ‘successful’ and ‘unsuccessful’ performances, but Feuer demonstrates the way it is only the unsuccessful performances that are demystified. The successful performance comes to stand in for a musical performance, presenting the ultimate valorisation of Hollywood entertainment. *Dancer in the Dark*, like the Hollywood musical, is self-reflexive in the way it both *is* and *is about* the musical. However, *Dancer in the Dark* takes this self-reflexivity further in the way it engages the body through affect and the non-representational to render the body consciously reflective and establish an intersubjective engagement with Selma. This is what I reflect on further through Marks and Dyer.

Both Dyer and Marks draw on C.S. Peirce’s terminology to determine how non-representational signs convey meaning.<sup>10</sup> Dyer understands the relationship between non-representational signs and their meaning as iconic; there is “as much coding in the emotions as in the signs for them”.<sup>11</sup> For Dyer, a viewer’s response to the non-representational signs is predetermined through an “affective code”, one that arises historically and culturally, and bears a resemblance (at the level of structuration) to the coding of the non-representational. Meaning arises through these signs because a viewer has been taught by entertainment, by the musical and by a socio-cultural context, how to respond to them. Marks, on the other hand, argues that the iconic and the symbolic always coexist with the indexical, requiring sensory mediation and only given meaning through a viewer’s embodied, responsive

interaction. This distinction between Dyer and Marks determines their understanding of affect. For Dyer, the utopian sensibility of the musical can therefore serve specific ideological agendas. Just as entertainment itself will define what entertainment is, so too does the musical provide its own definitions for the values it espouses: “once we have a definition of what freedom is” says Dyer “we can embrace it joyously (hence the political importance of utopianism) but a freedom of feeling that knows no definition is terrifying”.<sup>12</sup> When Dyer stressed the affective, utopian dimension of the musical, he was thus conceiving of utopia as it relates to ‘wish-fulfillment’ and ‘escape’. Here, utopia is to be understood as an ideal place where social, political and moral issues can be negotiated and seem to be resolved. Marks’ interstitial model of feeling, understanding it as sensation in the body rather than cultural sensibility, invites a redefinition or alternative understanding of utopia, one more closely related to its etymological root from the Greek *ou* (not) + *topos* (place), not an ideal place, but a non-place. This definition of utopia as a ‘non-place’ sets it up as a site of subjectivity and feeling that lies outside of ideology’s reach.

*Dancer in the Dark* certainly does provide us with a freedom of feeling that knows no definition. In a manner that has come to be expected from self-declared ‘enfant terrible’ Lars von Trier, the film radically refuses to approach the musical genre and employ its representational strategies in a conventional way. Understood most simply, *Dancer in the Dark* is a parody or subversion of the genre. However, the film also provides perhaps one of the most concerted efforts to think through an interrogation of the musical; it not only deconstructs, but also inhabits the musical in an affirmative way through its recasting of musical codes in the haptic register and its location of utopia as non-place of sensation felt within the body of its protagonist.

This article will begin by discussing how one can understand *Dancer in the Dark*’s deconstruction of the musical genre, addressing the way the film handles the cinematic and affective codes that Dyer discusses and whether the musical conveys utopia through sensibility or sensation. It will then move on to consider what new values the musical acquires through its deconstruction and appeal to the haptic in the film’s form. Here, in conjunction with Marks, I draw on the work of Vivian Sobchack, which poses a “materialist - rather than idealist - understanding of *aesthetics* and *ethics*”.<sup>13</sup> The article will ask what form of engagement with cinema the musical demands of us, developing Roland Barthes and Jean Luc Nancy’s discussions on listening and audition to show how Selma teaches us a new way of listening to the world and of responding to film. Finally, I will address the way *Dancer in the Dark* makes us, as ‘viewers’, feel.<sup>14</sup> The question becomes what kind of utopia are we made to feel in this twenty-first-century return to the Hollywood musical, how are these feelings manifested and what are their implications for how and why we should continue to attend to the musical as a genre.

*Dancer in the Dark* continually uses and confuses a viewer’s expectations of the Hollywood musical in order to disassemble it. This using and confusing is made explicit through *Dancer in the Dark*’s self-reflexive incorporation of a performance of *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965). The choice of *The Sound of Music* as an intertext is itself interesting in the way it sets the tone for a dismantling of the genre. As a late musical, *The Sound of Music* is in some ways a knowing text, developed at a point where the genre was facing extinction. Part of the studio musical’s diminishing popularity was due to the overproduction of Broadway adaptations at the end of the 1960s, so the extremely amateur performance staged in *Dancer in the Dark* (Selma is rehearsing the part of Maria at her local town hall) resonates with the climate of threat

to the musical, from the perspective of the genre's history. Dyer, speaking of the 1965 Robert Wise film version, explains how the musical number 'My Favourite Things' foregrounds the importance of the non-representational in the musical genre. He argues:

It is essentially the *music* that cheers, not thinking of the nice things, for when, later in the film (after Maria has temporarily left the von Trapps), the children attempt to reprise the song, the result is lugubrious, dispirited. It is only when Maria returns during the attempted reprise, and in her singing recovers the song's bounce, that it is effective. This is because 'My Favourite Things', despite its lyrics, expresses in the way it is presented more the essential spontaneity and warm community of music than the comfort of nice thoughts.<sup>15</sup>

*The Sound of Music* is therefore just as much, if not more, about the *sound* of music than it is about a governess and captain falling in love in Austria during the lead up to the Second World War. This is evidence of Feuer's argument that the musical is a self-referential genre with an ultimate need to valorise itself and entertainment, to suggest that "life should aspire to the condition of musical performance".<sup>16</sup> In a humorous and parodic manner, *Dancer in the Dark* literalises (or materialises) the lyrics of 'My Favourite Things' by having each of the the favourite things brought out onto the stage for Selma to hold. This profound misunderstanding of the song converts the non-representational (value residing in the music, performance and act of singing) into the representational (value residing in the set of discrete objects) and demonstrates its failure, as Selma cannot keep up with the music. The section equally parodies the musical convention described as '*bricolage*' by Feuer, who argues that the myth of entertainment and its valorisation depends on mediating and seemingly resolving the musical's inherent contradictions through, for example, the "myth of spontaneity". This myth of spontaneity is important in the musical for it masks the technology and elaborate calculation necessary for its complex production, making the musical appear to be part of nature, rather than culture. In *bricolage*:

performers make use of props-at-hand - curtains, movie paraphernalia, umbrellas, furniture - to create the imaginary world of the musical performance. This *bricolage*, a hallmark of the post-Gene Kelly MGM musical, creates yet another contradiction: an effect of spontaneous realism is achieved through simulation.<sup>17</sup>

Rather than Selma's props having their calculated place on stage and reason for being there, Kathy is seen clumsily appearing from off-stage, handing Selma bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens. The performance is stripped of the myth of spontaneity, demystifying the musical as life tries and fails to approximate the condition of musical performance. What is revealed instead is the simulation musicals depend on and the contradictions that they negotiate and bridge. In the musical numbers, props-at-hand do make an appearance, but not in a way that can be seen to correspond to Feuer's concept of *bricolage*. In the musical number 'Cvalda', fellow factory workers dance with machines, brooms, carts and levers. Yet, the transition into a wholly contrasting visual aesthetic for the musical number makes these props-at-hand hard to recognise and accept as part of the diegetic world of the film, interrupting the myth of spontaneity and its function in the service of realism.

If the musical is, as Feuer argues, a drive to overcome difference and mediate such contradictions between narrative and musical number, *Dancer in the Dark*'s refusal to do so could be seen as the film's most formally subversive aspect. The musical numbers of Selma's inner world do employ the same non-representational qualities (of colour, of camerawork etc.) as the Hollywood musical and, in doing so, the musical numbers also convey similar joyous feelings of energy, abundance, intensity, transparency and community. However, *Dancer in the Dark* makes no attempt to reconcile the aesthetic disjunction between the static camera, fragmentary editing and colourful artificiality of the musical numbers and the saturated colours, natural lighting and handheld camera of the narrative. Patricia Pisters, who employs a Deleuzian approach in her reading of *Dancer in the Dark*, looks specifically at the aesthetic contrasts between narrative and musical number, arguing that each musical scene begins with a "degree zero in which the rhythm and nature of the images starts to change and then transport us into another world".<sup>18</sup> This could suggest that *Dancer in the Dark* does mediate its contradictions through this 'degree zero', employing what Dyer called a 'papering-over-the-cracks device'. However, Pisters goes on to suggest that these contrasts, though mediated by these degree zero moments, structure the film as a whole and create a "dialectical structure of oppositions".

That these oppositions are not overcome, means that the non-representational cannot be considered iconic in the way Dyer suggests. It is the coding of emotion, the affective code of sensibility, which allows the non-representational qualities of the musical to be considered iconic. Dyer sees their logic of resemblance residing not necessarily in appearance but at "the level of basic structuration".<sup>19</sup> *Dancer in the Dark* however, refuses to submit to coding the non-representational and reflects this resistance formally by allowing its musical numbers to swing, appendage-like, about the narrative body, violating a viewer's expectations of traditional cinematic code. While the viewer may therefore recognise the non-representational ingredients in *Dancer in the Dark*, they lack both the affective and cinematic coding required to stabilise their meanings.

*Dancer in the Dark*'s affect without code, or rather, its alternative code, means that, contrary to the Hollywood musical, *Dancer in the Dark* explicitly draws attention to the gap between "what *is* and what *could* be" that Hollywood musicals usually overcome through mediating the oppositions between narrative and musical number.<sup>20</sup> The utopian feelings of the musical world are structured by an insurmountable difference that suggest this world is at a fundamental distance from the world of the narrative. In drawing attention to this gap, *Dancer in the Dark* undoes the suture that Hollywood musicals depend on to function as ideological products, thus working against the musical as a commodified utopia where "entertainment provides alternatives to capitalism which will be provided by capitalism".<sup>21</sup>

*Les Parapluies de Cherbourg/The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (Jacques Demy, 1964) is another example of a musical from the post-classical era that deliberately fails to manage this distinction in order to destabilise the way the non-representational functions. Demy's narrative is subsumed entirely by the musical form. Rather than it feeling as though the musical world has taken over reality however, it feels as if reality has instead hijacked the musical world. Naturalistic dialogue as well as the beautiful protagonist's (Catherine Deneuve) melancholy and indifference, insinuate themselves into the great orchestral numbers to undercut the non-representational and sap it of its bounce.<sup>22</sup>

*Dancer in the Dark*, however, still uses the musical to express what utopia would *feel* like and even maintains the conventional opposition between

representational narrative (that posits a problem), and non-representational musical numbers (that provide escape or resolution). As a viewer, we require a different mode of sense-making to understand its code.

Selma's blindness allows for a formal exploration of embodiment that Marks sees as privileged in its ability to approach intercultural experience. The film's articulation of the relation between blindness and the exilic allows us to revisit the musical from a "non-fetishizing form of looking, one that invites the "viewer" to experience the object not so much visually as through bodily contact".<sup>23</sup> Selma's bodily engagement speaks to the structures of *feeling* inherent in the musical, as discussed by Dyer, though in a way that reveals the musical as at once an *object* and an *experience* open to engagement, where meaning remains dialogic, and sensation, un-coded. The musical not only provides Selma with an escape, it gives her a site of resistance against the Hollywood musical's hegemony: through coming into *contact* with the musical in a way that moves beyond the representational and the visual, Selma's "sense-ability" allows her to transcend and subvert the utopic sensibility of the musical.<sup>24</sup> Just as Selma goes beyond the musical as cultural object, von Trier's musical too exceeds its Hollywood frame. He employs Hollywood's conventional 2.35:1 aspect ratio, yet it struggles to contain the aesthetic excess and mess of sensation brought to us through Selma. Instead, the aspect ratio's panoramic proportions are graphically matched by the surveillance slit on the door to Selma's prison cell as she waits to be taken to the gallows, drawing an uncomfortable link between Hollywood's scopic economy and other regimes of surveillance and power. While the film thus speaks from within hegemonic frameworks, employing the musical genre as a frame and parodying musical convention from within this frame, von Trier also subverts the musical by giving us new frames: Selma's blurred, myopic ones. It is through this intimate, haptic engagement with the musical - one that acknowledges both its materiality and its material presence - that we may begin to understand what utopia really *feels* like.

The viewer-auditor senses in *Dancer in the Dark* through the film's appeal to non-visual knowledge. Britta H. Sjogren, in her work on the female voice, examines the way *Dancer in the Dark* breaks away from a scopic economy by effecting a spectatorial relationship with Selma that "detaches her from the gaze" while her (Björk's) voice opens out onto another realm of perception.<sup>25</sup> My argument wishes to build on this to suggest that von Trier's camera too succeeds in emulating other realms of perception. The camera often frames Selma's face from such close-up proximity that we see it only partially, the frame excluding parts that would make the image of a face seem 'complete' or 'whole' in the way we are accustomed. This resonates with Gilles Deleuze's discussion of *visagéité* (faciality) and Béla Balázs's discussion of the close-up that Marks herself builds on in developing the concept of haptic visuality. Deleuze argues that all close-ups are a face (or 'faceify' their object) for they create an intensification of affect within the image: "It is this combination of a reflecting, immobile unity and of intensive expressive movements which constitutes the affect [...] each time we discover these two poles in something we can say it has been treated as a face [...] and in turn it stares at us".<sup>26</sup> Selma's face in close-up, by exceeding the frame, goes beyond what the frame can comprehend and so, through the close-up's rebellion against the frame, Selma does defiantly stare back. In making part of the image invisible to the viewer, von Trier makes visible something else, what Balázs explains as the close-up's ability to engage with the "dramatic revelations of what is happening under the surface of appearances".<sup>27</sup> Von Trier's use

of close-ups on Selma's face functions as a means of abstraction, one that bears witness to the invisible condition of her sight. It confronts the viewer with what lies beneath the surface by involving them in the image with a new kind of intimacy, bringing them into contact with Selma's eyes as wounds that do not look back. The close-up reveals simultaneously Selma's blindness and our own, as it forces us to confront her illegibility. The viewer is thus made to understand the flesh, as Steven Shavero argues, as at once cinema's "subject, substance and limit".<sup>28</sup>

This appeal to non-visual knowledge becomes essential when it comes to the musical numbers themselves. Another means by which von Trier uses non-representational signs in order to create a haptic, embodied image and sound is through his use of one-hundred cameras to shoot the dance sequences from many possible angles. This allows the moving bodies to pass freely through the space, rather than being trapped by a camera that captures them within the frame and contains their movement for a viewer's visual pleasure. The hundred-camera strategy evokes what Patrick Heelan has termed a "hyperbolic version of space", as opposed to its alternative, the culturally-normative Euclidean visual space that has dominated from the Renaissance. In hyperbolic space, the subject:

must...use the rule of congruence which...is embodied in the capacity of the unaided visual system to order the sizes, depths and distances of all objects in the unified spatial field of vision.<sup>29</sup>

Hyperbolic space, Sobchack explains referencing Heelan, is the "curved space of our lived and embodied experience" whereas Euclidean space is our perception of space as it is conditioned by maps and signs; the geometrical systems that make it universally intelligible.<sup>30</sup> The freely moving bodies in von Trier's musical numbers are liberated in this embodied, hyperbolic version of space. Instead of providing scopical mastery, the space is made less intelligible for the viewer as it fails to be plotted along Cartesian lines and tracking shots, or according to cinematic continuity-logic. Instead, we must orientate ourselves in relation to these other bodies that function as ever-shifting subjective signposts.

Though it is the musical numbers that most overtly engage with Selma's musical reinvention of the world around her and present us with access to her embodied existence, the movement of the camera that films the narrative equally appeals to forms of non-visual knowledge. Its handheld, unstable nature bestows an embodied, human presence behind the image. The camera often seems to follow aural cues rather than visual ones. Contrary to Vertov's "cine-eye", von Trier's camera functions as a 'cine-ear'.<sup>31</sup> On a basic level, this happens when people speak; the camera pivots round to follow the sound of a voice, rather than cutting to and setting up the image for the next line of dialogue. However, the camera also follows non-verbal cues. For example, when Selma agrees to take on the night shift in the factory and Kathy turns up to help her, the viewer hears Kathy's clatter, foregrounded by the sound editing, as she picks up the metal sink from the factory machine. Selma turns her head and the camera cuts to the sound source where the image *then* reveals the source of the noise. By hearing Kathy first, the viewer is made to live acoustically and experience space aurally alongside Selma's subjectivity. Von Trier's camera movement is guided by the hierarchy of Selma's own sensory organisation.

Marks makes a distinction between aural signs and aural textures which she maps on to the difference between optical images and haptic images:



Of course we cannot literally touch sound with our ears, just as we cannot touch images with our eyes; but as vision can be optical or haptic, so too can hearing perceive the environment in a more or less instrumental way. We *listen* for specific things, while we *hear* ambient sounds as an undifferentiated whole.”<sup>32</sup>

Selma’s attention to the haptic, aural textures that surround her become the viewer’s cues for entering into the haptic visuality of the musical numbers, passing through the different strata of the film’s diegesis. Marks claims that in settings such as nightclubs or construction sites) “the aural boundaries between body and world may feel indistinct”.<sup>33</sup> *Dancer in the Dark* emphasises this blurring boundary by always identifying the diegetic sound source (such as the scribbling of pencils) that provokes the aural texture created through Selma’s bodily imagination.

Selma’s ability to create these aural textures, as well as the camera’s attentive mode of existing alongside Selma as a ‘cine-ear’, suggests that *Dancer in the Dark* posits an alternative mode of listening to the musical. This provokes an exploration of listening as it has been theorised by Roland Barthes and Jean-Luc Nancy which allows us to consider the political and ethical dimensions of *Dancer in the Dark*’s use of haptic sound. Barthes argues that it is by way of rhythm that listening becomes creation.<sup>34</sup> His article on listening historically charts the different forms of listening that have determined relations between human beings, and he ends the essay advocating for a new form of listening, something he terms “free listening” which he sees as political: “freedom of listening is as necessary as freedom of speech”.<sup>35</sup> For Barthes, it is “not possible to imagine a free society if we agree in advance to preserve within it the old modes of listening: those of the believer, the disciple, and the patient”. Instead Barthes suggests a mode of listening where “what is listened to [...] is not the advent of a signified, object of a recognition or of a deciphering, but the very dispersion, the *shimmering of signifiers*, ceaselessly restored to a listening which ceaselessly produces new ones from them without ever arresting their meaning”.<sup>36</sup> Selma demonstrates this utopian form of creative listening in her ability to convert, or compose, from indices and signs, aural textures. She sets the aural signs that surround her in motion, listening to their vibrations, and as they start to shimmer, their meanings destabilised, they become an aural texture.

It works in this way to consider the musical sequences in *Dancer in the Dark* as meta-diegetic and interstitial, pertaining to narration at one remove, rather than completely separate non-diegetic pieces. The musical numbers do carry the narration forward, such as in ‘107 Steps’ where the song facilitates the painful progress towards the gallows, both in narrative terms and through physical space.<sup>37</sup> Unlike in the classical musical, action and progress through space are not telescoped to fit the song, the “logic of the real world does not give way to the logic of the song, of music”.<sup>38</sup> Instead, physical progress through space - the commensurate 107 steps to reach the gallows - actually becomes the material of the song. The musical numbers are not therefore mere dream-sequences where we ‘see inside Selma’s head’. They are where we sense, in fact, what Selma’s body *feels*. Barthes points out that dreams are a strictly visual phenomenon where any illusion of audition reaches us in the form of “acoustic images”.<sup>39</sup> With Selma, von Trier is offering us the opposite: something we might term a ‘visual acoustics’ or even ‘visual sensation’ - Dyer’s embodied structures of feeling exposed at the surface.

Bringing these embodied structures of feeling to the surface, rendering them visible, is important, for it exteriorises the experience of listening, whose relationship

with interiority has been a point of criticism for both Barthes and Nancy. Their articles on listening highlight the problematic aspects of listening's interiority and associations with intimacy. Barthes argues that when we moved from a listening to *indices* to a listening to *signs*, listening became linked to hermeneutics, it became about deciphering, decoding, uncovering an "underside" to meaning. Barthes writes:

The communication implied by this second listening is religious: it *ligatures* the listening subject to the world of the gods, who, as everyone knows, speak a language of which only a few enigmatic fragments reach men [...] To *listen* is the evangelical verb par excellence: listening to the divine world is what faith amounts to.<sup>40</sup>

For Barthes though, this religious aspect of listening is problematic, for "as soon as religion is internalized, what is plumbed by listening is intimacy, the heart's secret: Sin." Nancy too highlights the nature of secrecy associated with listening:

After it had designated a person who listens (who spies), the word *écoute* came to designate a place where one could listen in secret. *Être aux écoutes*, "to listen in, to eavesdrop," consisted first in being in a concealed place where you could surprise a conversation or a confession. *Être à l'écoute*, "to be tuned in, to be listening," was in the vocabulary of military espionage before it returned, through broadcasting, to the public space, while still remaining, in the context of the telephone, an affair of confidences or stolen secrets.<sup>41</sup>

Both Barthes and Nancy present us with a version of listening framed by its relationship to interiority and secrecy, one that plays into the power dynamics of confession and confidence. *Dancer in the Dark* includes examples where listening has gone wrong that occur within the film's dystopic narrative. When Selma and Bill swap secrets, their exchange demonstrates these problematic forms of listening. Selma relieves Bill of his secret (that he is near bankruptcy) in a manner that Barthes terms the "servile listener of an inferior", while she confesses, or rather sacrifices, her secret to Bill (that she is going blind), as a form of comfort and equal exchange. Bill, as landlord and figure of authority (representing police, law, state), listens in the mode of a superior and then exploits the other meanings implied by *écoute*, when he lies in wait, hidden from sight only by Selma's blindness, visually eavesdropping to see where Selma keeps her savings.

By exteriorising the experience of listening in the musical numbers and presenting it as emerging carnally through the senses, rhythm experienced in the body, *Dancer in the Dark* provides alternatives to these problematic associations of listening. When showing the viewer the utopic sensations Selma's body feels when she listens and creates music from sound, *Dancer in the Dark* demonstrates the immersive nature of sound that cuts across binary divisions of inside and outside, self and other. Nancy argues "sound has no hidden face; it is all in front, in back, and outside inside, inside-out in relation to the most general logic of presence".<sup>42</sup> Selma's listening aims at - or is aroused by - what Nancy describes as "the one where sound and sense mix together and resonate in each other, or through each other".<sup>43</sup>

Barthes also employs a language of externalising when describing his concept of "free listening". It is when one listens to sound "in its raw and as though vertical signifying: by deconstructing itself, listening is externalised, it compels the subject to renounce his "inwardness"". <sup>44</sup> This, Barthes claims, is contrary to listening to

something such as a piece of classical music, where the listener is called upon to “decipher” by applying his cultural sensibility, his or her predetermined code. Barthes is arguing for a “sense-ability”, rather than sensibility, and given the political context in which he positions this “free listening”, thus positions it as an openness to response that is configured as a responsibility. Von Trier’s musical, in striving to emulate and make visible Selma’s listening, her material engagement with the musical, equally points to cinema’s own aesthetic and ethical sense-abilities, setting these up as a responsibility; both for cinema itself but also for spectatorship and how one engages with film.

Selma offers the viewer an immersive relationship with the world through her osmotic ability to transcend the boundaries between her body and her surroundings by using the musical form: “she can sound like a machine or a violin”.<sup>45</sup> This is a kind of mimesis that depends on material contact with one’s surroundings and their sensuous remaking of the body. Susan Buck-Morss identifies mimesis as a way of inhabiting the world that anaesthetises the organism “not through numbing, but through flooding the senses”.<sup>46</sup> As Selma escapes into the sensuous refuge of the musical, replete with the non-representational, she demonstrates not only an alternative way of inhabiting the world, but also implicates the viewer in an alternative relationship with cinema itself by demonstrating what Marks has claimed as cinema’s ability to “bring viewers into a mimetic relationship with the image”.<sup>47</sup> *Dancer in the Dark*’s employment of the non-representational therefore goes beyond what Dyer identifies as the ‘stuff’ of the musical, beyond semiotics’ ability to convey “what utopia would feel like” to Marks’ assertion that “semiotic approaches cannot take into account the embodied nature of the cinematic viewing experience”.<sup>48</sup> While Dyer understands the non-representational, in Peirce’s terms, as being iconic, (“resemblance at the level of basic structuration”), Marks understands the non-representational as being indexical, given meaning by its viewer, through the mimetic, responsive interaction that requires a reader/viewer/feeler:

Even in the most sophisticated representational systems, such as writing or cinema, the iconic and symbolic coexist with the indexical: representation is inextricable from embodiment.<sup>49</sup>

Sobchack, agreeing with Marks, equally suggests that the relationship between viewer and screen is always indexical, referring to this relationship’s reciprocity. “The cinesthetic subject” she argues “both touches and is touched by the screen [...] able to experience the movie as both here and there”, as is demonstrated in the image of Selma in the cinema (fig. 1).<sup>50</sup> Yet for Sobchack, the senses’ ability to “commute seeing to touching” and “translate without the need of an interpreter” suggests that this indexical relationship is *practically* iconic, not because our affective emotions are coded, in the way Dyer argues, but because our networks of sensation are so immediate, volatile and synaesthetic. Selma continues to see at the cinema because she continues to sense. This model of spectatorship, thematised by *Dancer in the Dark*, demands that we ask how it, as a cinematic object and experience, makes us, as “viewers” and corporeal subject-objects, feel?

While Sobchack, as I have mentioned, understands the body as having a reflexive relationship with the screen, she argues that it is “not consciously reflective” believing this would interrupt a viewer’s ability to be immersed in film.<sup>51</sup> Yet, by drawing attention, through Selma, to bodily response, *Dancer in the Dark* does indeed render

the body, our bodies, consciously reflective. *Dancer in the Dark* does not lay bare the image, but instead lays bare the image's non-visual effects on the body, awakening us to the sensation and experience we bear in our bodies.

Rather than this conscious reflectivity standing in the way of immersion in *Dancer in the Dark*, this model of spectatorship emerges through a process that instead facilitates our immersion. The viewer, initially estranged by the film's subversion of the musical's cinematic codes, witnesses them as if through a distancing frame; not only does the first number arrive forty minutes into the film when we are not expecting it, the digital gaudiness of the colourful musical numbers perhaps even have, initially, a slightly grotesque quality to them. Yet the viewer grows more accustomed to *Dancer in the Dark*'s untethered transition from narrative to musical number. Through familiarity, they accept and anticipate these transitions and so more willingly participate in Selma's 'externalised interior', her inner nervous flesh that the film reverses and brings to vibrate on the surface.<sup>52</sup>

Over the course of *Dancer in the Dark*, Selma's other senses are removed and she becomes progressively estranged from her own body. In prison, silence reigns around Selma, as well as an absence of touch and smell. The viewer accompanies Selma in this experience. In parallel to her sensory stimuli receding, von Trier begins to deny his viewer the non-representational. Prison strips the world of a materiality Selma can engage with. Selma strains her ear to try and hear *something* from the air vent in her cell, and out of the scraps of sound emerging in silence, makes an effort to conjure 'My Favourite Things'. The visual aesthetics strain to switch into the musical mode the film has established through its visual codes and the viewer can feel a shift, but the colours remain saturated, reflecting the moment's feebleness. This process continues right up until the point of Selma's execution, when von Trier pulls the rug from under the viewer, taking away all the 'stuff' of the musical, its material pile, in the final number, the 'Next-to-Last Song'. The return to pure diegetic narrative for *Dancer in the Dark*'s final musical 'number' becomes a violent return to the scopic. To participate as viewers in the final scene, where Selma sings on the gallows, from the "other side" of the musical (without the colours, textures and the fragmented camerawork) is unbearable, an image the newly sentient spectator cannot tolerate in their body or bear witness to. *Dancer in the Dark*, having taught the spectator throughout the course of the film how to accept its revised cinematic codes and engage intimately with a haptic mode of viewing and listening, now thrusts its 'cinesthetic subject' into a scopic position of intense realism that they no longer know how to distance themselves from. The viewer's prescribed cinematic frames (Selma's myopic ones) that acted as a shield from the violence of the visual and taught the viewer a revised model of spectatorship are suddenly absent, and so von Trier opens the 'trap door' on the spectator too, bringing them into a vertiginous relationship with the image in its visual brutality.

The viewer is thus led towards an intersubjective identification with Selma's blindness: we understand her condition through our own ability to be 'moved' in a bodily manner, our awareness that we too might engage in a corporeal way not only with the material world, but with musicals, and beyond them, film itself. Geoffrey Whitehall, who offers a Foucauldian reading of *Dancer in the Dark*, suggests: "when Selma tries to create her own music on the gallows, she still dies; instead, it is the audience who is moved".<sup>53</sup> As Selma's ability to escape into the sensuous shelter of the musical and slip into other authorial strata is taken away, the viewer is given the responsibility of continuing the 'Next-to-Last Song'. This is achieved particularly effectively with the use of the text-lyrics superimposed on the final image:

They say it's the last song/ They don't know us you see/ It's only the last  
song/ If we let it be

Selma's song is silenced by her execution, but also silently internalised by the viewer through the act of reading, and so given a new embodied site of resistance within the viewer. The emphasis on collectivity in these final words creates a community, yet it is a private one, intersubjectively constituted in the interstitial non-place between viewer and film, thus preserving the film's interest in displacement and marginalisation. *Dancer in the Dark's* haptic and intersubjective engagement is therefore just as subversive and political as von Trier's deconstruction of the codes of musical genre because it reveals the materiality of the non-representational as volatile and open to resignification. The tactile dimensions of *Dancer in the Dark's* form are thus where von Trier is most politically subversive. He takes the utopian sensibility of Hollywood entertainment and hands it over to the marginalised Selma, who internally inhabits and personalises this utopia through a complete embodied engagement with the musical and the structures of feeling it makes available.

Despite subverting the genre, *Dancer in the Dark* reaffirms Dyer's claim that the musical presents "what utopia would feel like", but allows us to understand this claim anew. Utopia emerges as a site between diegetic and non-diegetic space, emerging as a non-place made of pure feeling and sensation. In *Dancer in the Dark*, utopia is sensation itself, arising through the opportunities the musical affords for a haptic engagement, and not from a utopian sensibility. Selma illustrates that it is only the site of the physical body that can give this utopia a sensate home. Whereas the Hollywood musical strives to create an immersive utopian illusion into which the viewer enters via affect, *Dancer in the Dark* creates an immersive relationship with which we interact, defetishising the musical and transforming it from object into experience.

As well as this immersive, mimetic relationship, *Dancer in the Dark* reminds us of the musical (and cinema's) reciprocal relationship with the viewer as a corporeal being, that "we bring our own personal and cultural organisation of the senses to cinema and cinema brings a particular organisation of the senses to us".<sup>54</sup> *Dancer in the Dark* makes conscious the musical's self-reflexivity and the body's reflectivity, yet rather than this preventing us from engaging and immersing in the film and its narrative, it creates an intersubjective space of intimacy that brings us too close to the *material* to bear the violent distance of the scopic image in *Dancer in the Dark's* final scene.

This article has explored the way in which *Dancer in the Dark* presents a juncture between different areas of criticism and film that have typically been kept apart. This juncture produces new possibilities for engaging with the musical, its past, present and future. *Dancer in the Dark* invites us to bring in Marks' questions of the haptic in relation to the musical in order to think Dyer and the haptic alongside one another and further explore what a haptic sound and cinema might be. The new form given to the musical in *Dancer in the Dark* engages the sense patterns of the musicals from the golden age in a different way, allowing us to revisit the musical's past from this haptic perspective and understand its utopic affect in light of contemporary cinematic criticism. The potential for a haptic experience of the golden age musical can find traces today, for example, in the choice by Warner Bros. to restore and resurrect in 3-D, arguably a form which approaches the haptic, such productions as

MGM's *Kiss Me Kate* (George Sidney, 1953) in 2015, and *The Wizard of Oz* (Viktor Fleming, 1939) in 2013.<sup>55</sup>

*Dancer in the Dark* emerged at a new historical moment for the musical, following the period 1980-2000 that Steven Cohan suggests was characterised by an intolerance towards the musical as a result of “naïve or at least unwarranted sense of fidelity to cinematic realism”.<sup>56</sup> The field of post-2000 musicals saw the less-challenged persistence of the musical within the new cinematic homes it had found such as animations and musical biopics.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, in the musical's European context there are several examples of films keen to subvert the musical form to negotiate its utopic and dystopic sensibilities, such as Francois Ozon's *8 Femmes/8 Women* (2002) and Christophe Honoré's *Les Chansons d'Amour/Love Songs* (2007) and *Les Bien-aimés/Beloved* (2011).

Yet within this post-2000 field also emerged musicals apt to engage the senses otherwise, through the musical genre. *Romance and Cigarettes* (Turturro, 2005) employs and parodies musical conventions in order to figure intrusion and explore both adultery and the bodily register of the main character's lung cancer. Jennifer Barker has explored the sensory synaesthetic quality achieved through camera movement in what she terms the “cosmic zoom” in relation to the musicals *Moulin Rouge!* (Baz Luhrmann, 2001) and *Sweeney Todd* (Tim Burton, 2007).<sup>58</sup>

While I argue that *Dancer in the Dark* does not just deconstruct the Hollywood musical to dismantle the ideologies it upholds, but uses the haptic to engage with and inhabit the musical in an affirmative way, the haptic nature of the musical remains highly political and deviant. The very non-representational qualities of the musical that facilitate its ideological aims, as identified by Dyer, become the doorway and threshold through which Selma can enter the other side of the musical's edifice. This is possible because *Dancer in the Dark* understands the non-representational's relationship with affect, not as coded and therefore iconic, but as volatile and indexical. The moving image, according to Marks, is “an emissary, which is volatile to the degree that the viewer/receiver has access to the materiality of its original scene”.<sup>59</sup> In appropriating the iconic Hollywood musical and its material-laden use of non-representational signs, *Dancer in the Dark* reveals to us the musical's original volatility and renders its meanings indexical through the access the musical grants to its own materiality. For this reason, we may keep responding to it.

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<sup>1</sup> Haptic Visuality was first developed by Laura Marks in her 1998 *Screen* article 'Video Haptics and Erotics' and later expanded in her influential work *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', in *Only Entertainment*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 20. Essay originally published in *Movie* 24, Spring 1977.

<sup>3</sup> The 'golden age' of the Hollywood musical is typically defined as the period between the 1930s through to the 1950s. However, this article will also address later Hollywood musicals made in the 1960s, when the genre could be said to have become more 'knowing' and self-reflexive as a result of its maturation and in its response to changing audience tastes.

<sup>4</sup> *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, 2003). Contrary to *Dancer in the Dark*, in *Dogville* von Trier strips the film of all materiality. The town of Dogville is drawn out on the stage in chalk, allowing for a literal transparency that facilitates the unmasking and condemnation of American values.

<sup>5</sup> Laura Marks, 'Video Haptics and Erotics', *Screen*, vol. 39, no. 4 (1998), p. 332.

<sup>6</sup> Davina Quinlivan has also explored *Dancer in the Dark* through an engagement with Marks, though her discussion takes place specifically in relation to the breath in order to develop what Quinlivan terms a 'breathing visuality'. This article takes this engagement in a new direction to explore Marks' theory in relation to the musical genre itself. See Davina Quinlivan, *The Place of Breath in Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Jane Feuer, 'The Self-reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment' in Steven Cohan (ed.) *Hollywood Musicals, The Film Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> For a full account of Peirce's theorisation of the icon, the index and the symbol, please see Charles S. Peirce, 'On a New List of Categories', in Edward C. Moore et al. (eds), *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition, Volume 2: 1867-1871*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 49-59. A full definition here is beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>11</sup> Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Dyer, 'The Sound of Music', in *Only Entertainment*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 56. Essay originally published in *Movie* 23, 1976-7.

<sup>13</sup> Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> The term "viewer" is problematic in the context of this article which is arguing against a purely visual understanding of film. Though I continue to use it for the sake of simplicity and style, one should bear in mind that what is being referred to is a viewer-auditor who brings more than the visual sense to their engagement with the cinematic medium.

<sup>15</sup> Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> Feuer, *Hollywood Musicals, The Film Reader*, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Patricia Pisters, 'Touched by a Cardboard Sword': Aesthetic Creation and Non-Personal Subjectivity in *Dancer in the Dark* & *Moulin Rouge* in Joost de Billois, Sjef Houppermans, Frans-Willem Korsten (eds.). *Discernments: Deleuzian Aesthetics* (New York: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 151-169.

<sup>19</sup> Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Dyer explains how "the ideals of entertainment imply wants that capitalism itself promises to meet. Thus abundance becomes consumerism, energy and intensity personal freedom and individualism, and transparency freedom of speech". For a full explanation, see Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> The significance of Catherine Deneuve's casting across both *Dancer in the Dark* and *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* establishes her as part of Europe's own star system, where her persona signifies a history of European responses to the Hollywood musical. Deneuve features in other post-2000 musicals that play with the codes of the Hollywood musical such as Francois Ozon's *8 Femmes/8 Women* (2002) and Christophe Honoré's *Les Bien-aimés/Beloved* (2011).

<sup>23</sup> Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p.79.

<sup>24</sup> The term "sense-ability" is borrowed from Sobchack. See Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Britta Sjogren, *Into the Vortex: Female Voice and Paradox in Film*, (United States: University of Illinois Press, 2006), p. 190.

<sup>26</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, (London: Athlone Press, 1986), p. 88.

<sup>27</sup> Béla Belázy, *Theory of the Film*, trans. Edith Bone (New York: Arno, [1923]1972), p. 56.

<sup>28</sup> Steven Shavro, *The Cinematic Body*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 256.

<sup>29</sup> Patrick A. Heelen, *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 51.

<sup>30</sup> Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 16.

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- <sup>31</sup> Vertov's 'cine-eye' was theorised in 1922: "I am an eye. I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, I am showing you a world, the likes of which only I can see." See Dziga Vertov, 'We: A Variant of a Manifesto', *Kinofot*, August 25-31. No. 1, pp. 11-12.
- <sup>32</sup> Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 183.
- <sup>33</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Listening', in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 249.
- <sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 259.
- <sup>36</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> The music and lyrics for *Dancer in the Dark* were composed by Björk and feature on her album *Selmasongs*, also released in 2000. In the DVD's Special Features 'Behind the Scenes' interview with Björk, on playing the role of Selma, she says: "Since I was a child, I wanted to do a musical that was not like the Hollywood ones [...] You didn't have to be American with a lot of money and look great to have magic, it was something that everybody could do, in their own kitchen" (Fine Line Features, 2000)
- <sup>38</sup> Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, p. 51.
- <sup>39</sup> Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, p. 257.
- <sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 249-250.
- <sup>41</sup> Jean Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 4.
- <sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.
- <sup>43</sup> Nancy, *Listening*, p. 7.
- <sup>44</sup> Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, p. 259.
- <sup>45</sup> This is the phrase used by von Trier in his character sketch of Selma when he speaks of her enjoyment of mimicry. See Caroline Bainbridge, *The Cinema of Lars Von Trier: Authenticity and Artifice*, (London: Wallflower Press, 2007) p. 175.
- <sup>46</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered', *October*, vol. 62, no. 3 (1992), pp. 3-41.
- <sup>47</sup> Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 145.
- <sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 146.
- <sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 142.
- <sup>50</sup> Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 71.
- <sup>51</sup> See Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 79.
- <sup>52</sup> For a developed discussion on the reversibility of the flesh, see Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, pp. 286-318.
- <sup>53</sup> Geoffrey Whitehall, 'Musical Modulations of Political Thought', *Theory & Event*, vol. 9, no. 3. (2006), p. 42.
- <sup>54</sup> Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 153.
- <sup>55</sup> Miriam Ross explores the 3-D aesthetic's ability to produce new relationships between audience and screen with what she terms the 'hyperhaptic'. See Miriam Ross, 'The 3-D Aesthetic: *Avatar* and Hyperhaptic Visuality', *Screen*, vol. 53, no. 4 (2012), pp. 381-397. MGM's *Kiss Me Kate* was part of a concentrated early experimentation with 3-D between the years of 1952-1954. The decision in 1953 to make a musical in 3-D can be seen to indicate an awareness at the time of exploring some of the more tactile dimensions that the musical might afford. *Kiss Me Kate*'s 3-D restoration received screening at the British Film Institute in 2015 and was released on blu-ray DVD by Warner Bros. in the same year.
- <sup>56</sup> Steven Cohan, 'Introduction: How do you solve a problem like the film musical?', in Cohan (ed.), *The Sound of Musicals*, (London: BFI Publishing, 2010), pp. 1-5.
- <sup>57</sup> Steven Cohan discusses how musical animations, teen films that incorporate dance and musical biopics present less of a challenge to realism in *Hollywood Musicals, The Film Reader*, pp. 1-15.
- <sup>58</sup> Jennifer Barker. 'Neither Here nor There: Synaesthesia and the Cosmic Zoom', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, Vol 7, No. 3 (2009), pp. 311-324.
- <sup>59</sup> Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 92.